

Get a Free Conservation Plan and Be Ready for the Next EQIP Signup

State Conservationist Eric B. Banks, Salina, with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), recently announced the evaluation cutoff date for Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds has been set for Friday, **November 16, 2012**. Applicants who request a conservation plan by close of business, **Friday, August 31, 2012**, will receive additional points in the ranking process.

“Landowners and/or operators with eligible cropland, rangeland, or forestland with any EQIP concerns such as soil, water, air, plants, or animals can apply,” said Banks. “I encourage landowners to apply at their local NRCS field office by the end of August and work with staff to develop a conservation plan.”

In Kansas, socially disadvantaged, limited resource, and beginning farmers and ranchers will receive a higher payment rate for conservation practices related to EQIP.

Developing the Conservation Plan

“NRCS believes it is important that landowners and/or producers have a conservation plan on their land,” said Banks. “NRCS planners are available in every county. The planner will walk your land with you and listen to your goals and ideas relating to conserving your natural resources - soil, water, air, plants, and animals. From your input, the planner will develop the plan and discuss it with you, making sure it is what you envisioned.”

“The conservation plan is provided free of charge,” said Banks, “and you will be ready to sign up for Farm Bill programs as they are announced.”

Value of a Conservation Plan

Taking the time to invest in the development of a conservation plan allows producers to combine their farming skills with science-based knowledge and the skill of the conservation planner. With alternatives provided by the NRCS planner, producers can select the best possible combination of conservation practices to meet natural resource needs and individual management production goals. Additional benefits of a conservation plan include helping producers meet environmental regulations, qualify for various USDA conservation programs, and establish a reasonable schedule for applying needed conservation practices that fits a producer’s timeline and available resources. Addressing resource concerns through a comprehensive conservation plan can also boost the financial value of the land itself for the future.

Be Ready for the Next Farm Bill Signup

For more information on how you can get started developing a conservation plan and be ready for the next conservation program signup, contact your local USDA Service Center and visit the NRCS office. The Riley/Geary County Service Center is located at 3705 Miller Parkway, Suite A in Manhattan – in the Miller Park area, currently accessible from Amherst Avenue. Phone 785 776 7582 ext 1303 for Kevin Religa.

Information about NRCS in Kansas is available at www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.